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From: Horace Stoessel

Sent: Friday, March 31, 2006 9:47 AM

To: Charter Commission

Subject: SALARY COMMISSION

SALARY COMMISSION—IS IT WORKING?
FOR THE CHARTER COMMISSION, BY HORACE STOESSEL, 4/5/06

The Charter Commission may recommend charter amendments when it finds that some part of government is not working, due in part to a deficiency in the charter. I suggest that the Salary Commission is not working, due in part to flaws in Article 29.

I note first that three of nine commissions were not appointed at all (1997-98, 2001-02, and 2005-06) and that none were appointed in a timely manner.

In 1990 the first commission recommended the largest administrative raises in county history and the council approved. The commission awarded comparable raises to the council.

In 1994 the commission recommended four 4.5% administrative raises spread over two and a half years. The council approved three of the raises and later cancelled two of the three. The commission awarded four matching raises to the council, the fourth of which was cancelled by the 1996 commission at council's request.

In 1996 the commission recommended administrative raises on condition that they should not be approved "until revenues surpass operating expenses and budget goals are met. Any revenue increase should not come in the form of increased rates, or tax revenues, user fees, special assessments, or any other impounds." Council did not approve the raises.

In 1999 the mayor submitted a proposal for administrative raises to the council before the Salary Commission was appointed and began meeting in late October. Both mayor and council "encouraged" the commission to endorse the mayor's proposal. The commission refused and instead submitted its own recommendation in July, 2000. The recommendation was not approved. The chairman of the commission later recommended in a public letter that the commission be abolished due to political machinations.

In 2004 the commission recommended administrative raises effective 7/1/2004 and the council approved. The commission later recommended a second round of raises effective 7/1/2005 that was not approved. The commission awarded raises to the council effective 12/1/04 and 12/1/05.

In my opinion there are two options for correcting the situation insofar as charter amendments are involved. The first option is to restore the charter provisions that were in effect prior to the adoption of Article 29 and eliminate Article 29. The second option is to amend the charter along the lines suggested by the Salary Commission, with refinements like those I have suggested.